

# Dilawar Syed

Dilawar Syed is an entrepreneur, board member, and former U.S. cabinet official whose leadership has spanned various public and private sector organizations, including as Deputy Administrator for the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) and Special Envoy for Commercial Affairs at the State Department. In a decades-long career in Silicon Valley, Dilawar led and scaled ventures in AI, software, and consumer web.

After his public service, he has joined the LBJ School of Public Affairs at The University of Texas at Austin as Senior Economic Policy Advisor, to lead a new initiative on advancing U.S. business competitiveness, and as faculty at the LBJ School and UT's McCombs School of Business. He is advising several technology ventures as a board member.

Dilawar's most recent role as SBA Deputy Administrator began with a bipartisan vote of the U.S. Senate. Dilawar advanced the Biden Administration's priorities for small businesses by democratizing access to capital (\$56 billion in 2024), government contracting (\$183 billion in 2024), and entrepreneurship enablement, especially in the underserved and rural communities. He coordinated SBA's disaster response after Hurricanes Helene and Milton in the Southeast, the Francis Scott Key Bridge collapse in Baltimore, MD, and the wildfires in Maui, HI.

As Special Envoy for Commercial Affairs at the U.S. Department of State, Dilawar served as America's top commercial diplomat, championing U.S. companies in markets abroad and strengthening U.S. competitiveness. He mobilized private sector support for Ukraine after Russia's invasion, advocated for strategic deals in advanced tech, energy, aviation, and defense, and negotiated market access in his 24 bilateral engagements across the globe.

Dilawar's civic entrepreneurship has spanned local, state, and federal governments. Appointed by President Obama in 2010 to the White House Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, he led engagement with small businesses during the economic recovery. In 2017, he launched the California Entrepreneurship Task Force with the Governor's Office to bridge Silicon Valley with rural communities and promote inclusive entrepreneurship.

Dilawar has previously served as CEO of Lumiata, an AI healthcare company backed by Khosla Ventures and BlueCross BlueShields, and as President at Freshworks, where he founded the software company's North America business. Freshworks had a successful IPO in 2021. Earlier, he held leadership roles at Yahoo! and Siebel Systems. Dilawar started his career in management consulting at Ernst & Young and Deloitte Consulting.

Dilawar holds an MBA from The Wharton School and a BA in Computer Science and Economics from The University of Texas at Austin.